

Egypt wants to shift focus to developing countries in climate talks -official

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CAIRO: Egypt will position itself as an impartial arbiter while hosting this year's COP27 UN climate summit, as it pushes other nations to act on climate pledges while promoting the interests of the developing world, a senior Egyptian official said.

Egypt, where unauthorized public demonstrations are banned, would also welcome protests within the rules of the Nov. 7-18 summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, said Wael Aboulmagd, special representative to the COP27 president.

A natural gas exporter, Egypt takes over presidency of the UN climate talks from Britain. Last year's summit in Glasgow, Scotland, ended with the nearly 200 countries in attendance promising to strengthen their climate pledges this year.

Wealthy nations also disappointed many in Glasgow by saying they would not deliver the \$100 billion per year promised from 2020 until 2023 to help developing countries with their energy transition and with adapting to a warming world.

Delivering this financing is among Egypt's priorities for COP27. It also wants to focus on securing separate "loss and damage" funds, or compensation payments to climate-vulnerable countries already suffering from climate-related weather extremes, Aboulmagd said in an interview.

"There are issues that are of interest and priority to developing countries, and there are high expectations from us as a developing country to ensure that these issues are taken on board and that they achieve commensurate progress with how important they are," he said.

But Egypt also would seek to mediate between developed and developing countries that have clashed over issues including carbon emissions and climate financing, as it tries to help steer a move from pledges to action, Aboulmagd said.

"In this particular year it is in the interest of the process that a perception of impartiality and equal distance from everyone is maintained." Aboulmagd said Egypt was working to launch about 17 voluntary initiatives in areas including food and agriculture and water management, hoping to inspire ideas and action to help countries meet their pledges.

Egypt is fine tuning its own updated target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions, known as a nationally determined contribution (NDC).

"We intend to move even faster, despite very difficult circumstances,"

Aboulmagd said, referring to economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

To promote global access and representation at COP27, Egypt has sought to

fast track accreditation for under-represented civil society organizations from Africa, Aboulmagd said, adding that he hoped climate campaigners and activists play a constructive role.

“There are certain rules and we’re working with the secretariat to ensure that if there are people who want to protest, they’re entitled to do that, and it’s done in a peaceful manner,” he said.

“It’s good to have people yelling at you – hopefully not throwing stuff at you, but just yelling at you and we’re accustomed to that.”

Egypt’s government had worked with hotels to provide affordable accommodation for participants in Sharm el-Sheikh, a tourist resort on the Red Sea, he said.

“What we have done to the utmost is to ensure that decent hotels and very reasonable rates are made available.”



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India is not responsible for toning down COP26 statement, says Minister ‘Saudi diplomacy helped save COP26 talks,’ says Kingdom’s energy minister

Iraqi boy eludes security to board Iran-bound plane

Author:

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Wed, 2022-05-25 23:26

NAJAF: Iraqi aviation authorities have been left red-faced after a 10-year-old boy on his own boarded an Iran-bound plane from a busy airport in a Shiite shrine city after several security checks.

The international airport in Najaf, south of Baghdad, said Wednesday it would review security after the boy passed under the radar of seven checks, mixing in with large crowds of travelers.

The child was only intercepted after boarding an Iran Air-chartered aircraft, airport manager Hikmat Ahmed told AFP.

About five hours after his arrival at the airport on Monday night, "the plane crew contacted us about him," he said.

"Anyone who failed in their duties will be sanctioned, fired or transferred" after an investigation, the official said.

According to a security source, his parents who live in a district near the airport had informed police of his disappearance.

Iraq's civil aviation authority said a private firm had since 2019 been in charge of security at Najaf airport, which receives hundreds of thousands of pilgrims a year.

"All legal procedures" would be taken against the company once the investigation has been completed, it said.



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Governor of Iraq's Najaf resigns after protests
Iraq condemns attack on Iran's consulate in southern Najaf – Foreign Ministry

[More Iran sanctions needed to squeeze Hezbollah, says US Congressman Darrell Issa](#)

Wed, 2022-05-25 21:52

DAVOS, Switzerland: The Biden administration ought to apply further sanctions on Iran as a means of curtailing the influence of its Hezbollah proxy in Lebanon, says Darrell Issa, a US congressman who is part of the American delegation at the World Economic Forum.

Despite generating little of its own revenues, Hezbollah has long enjoyed free rein in Lebanon thanks to Iranian largess, Issa says. He believes

targeting Iran with further sanctions would undermine the militia's control over Lebanese affairs.

"As much as I want to sanction Hezbollah, the group doesn't generate much of their own money," Issa, a California Republican, told Arab News on the fringes of WEF in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday.

"Their money is disproportionate because of Iranian influence. So, yes, while I do want more bank sanctions, those are ultimately irrelevant, unless we increase our sanctions on Iran."

Issa was among a group of US congressmen who traveled to Lebanon on a fact-finding mission in November last year, later reporting back to President Joe Biden and Congress to propose ways to help the Lebanese.

Iran has a policy of arming and funding proxy militias in neighboring countries to further its own geopolitical agenda, often to the detriment of the security and well-being of local populations.

Although Lebanon's May 15 parliamentary election returned a poor result for Hezbollah and its allies, Issa says history shows the need to follow through on the results and not to simply return to business as usual.

"If there's a follow through, then there should be a new speaker and a new president free of unfair influence by Hezbollah," Issa told Arab News.

"There should be a realignment of ministries, and more than anything else there should be a resolution to end corruption.

"So far, the only thing we have are candidates who campaigned against corruption and who have achieved their goal of changing the majority, but they haven't achieved the goal of ending corruption yet."

Hezbollah, the only militia that did not disarm after Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, lost its majority in the Lebanese parliament, with its bloc winning just 62 of the 128 seats on offer – three fewer than it needed.

The election of many anti-corruption independents has presented Lebanon with a rare opportunity to break free of the militia's grip on public life and to carry out urgent reforms.

Since 2019, Lebanon has been in the throes of its worst ever financial crisis, which has been further compounded by the economic strain of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nation's political paralysis.

For many Lebanese, the final straw was the Beirut port blast of Aug. 2020, which killed 218, injured 7,000, caused \$15 billion in property damage, and left an estimated 300,000 people homeless.

These concurrent crises have sent thousands of young Lebanese abroad in search of security and opportunity, including many of the country's top medical professionals and educators. For Issa, preventing this brain-drain ought to be a high priority for any incoming government.

“Lebanon can turn around very quickly, but only if those people are still in the country,” Issa said. “And today, the US is trying to help, but there’s a lot of exodus from Lebanon, and that is going to hurt the recovery.”

INTERVIEW

More Iran sanctions needed to squeeze Hezbollah, says US congressman

Lebanon must follow through on election results by ending corruption and malign influence, says US representative

Tarek Ali Ahmad Davos

US President Joe Biden should apply further sanctions on Iran to curtail the influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon, a US congressman has told the World Economic Forum.

Darrell Issa, a Republican representative from California, said that despite generating little of its own revenues, Hezbollah has long enjoyed free rein in Lebanon thanks to Iranian support.

The congressman said targeting Iran with further sanctions would undermine the militia's control over Lebanese affairs.

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IRAN

Iran systematically undermines the stability of the region, Israeli president tells WEF

Arab News Davos

Iran is undermining the stability of the region and Israel cannot accept Tehran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities, the Israeli President Isaac Herzog told the World Economic Forum on Wednesday.

"The Iranian regime systematically undermines the stability of the region, Israel and all nations of the world cannot accept Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities, recognizing the threat it poses to Israel and the entire Middle East," Herzog said.

He said that every country or region infiltrated by Iran has had "the life sucked out of its people and its land," and that Tehran spreads hate, pain and suffering.

"Prosperity, human liberty, creativity and growth are all erased," he said, pointing to what has happened in Iraq, Yemen, Gaza, Syria and Lebanon.

"Israel is eager to share its prosperity and successes with all its neighbors to break down barriers imposed by Iran's influence. I truly believe that if we only choose the forces of light, the path to a drastically different brighter future is closer than we can imagine," Herzog said.

He added that Israelis will always extend their hands for peace to their neighbors from the "Levant to the Gulf, from the Maghreb to the Mashreq, from our immediate neighbours the Palestinians to the entire Muslim world, and also to the entire continent of Africa, and the entire Middle East."

When asked whether Saudi Arabia would follow in the footsteps of its Gulf neighbors the UAE and Bahrain in normalizing relations with Israel, Herzog said that although the Kingdom is a "very important country in the



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region," the process of joining the Abraham Accords "has to take its time."

"I think the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a very important country in the region. And we would love to see developments in that direction, but it's a process that has to take its

time I guess," Herzog commented.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan reiterated the Kingdom's stance regarding normalization with Israel at the WEF on Tuesday, saying nothing had changed despite recent unconfirmed media reports suggesting otherwise.

"I've addressed that several times in the past and nothing has changed in how we view the subject. I think we have always seen normalization as the end result, but the end result of a path," Prince Faisal told the WEF.

"We always envisioned that there will be full normalization with Israel, and I've said before that a full normalization between us and Israel, between the region and Israel, will bring immense benefits — we won't be able to reap those benefits unless we address the issue of Palestine," the foreign minister said.

Herzog also spoke about the death of veteran Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed in Jenin while covering Israeli raids on a refugee camp in the West Bank on May 11.

"This is of course a very sad event. And it pains me like it pains many Israelis," the president said. He said that Israel offered the Palestinians a joint investigation into the circumstances of the "tragic event" but that the Palestinians refused to cooperate.

"They took the body. They took the bullet and one cannot substantiate any one of the scenarios without those facts. And Israel was open and transparent and offered the US to join this process of investigation as well because we pay high importance to the freedom of speech and the work of journalists and media channels, and we respect them," he added.





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Iran systematically undermines the stability of the region, Israeli president tells WEFUS negotiator says odds against reviving Iran deal

[UN envoy says Yemen talks to reopen roads 'collective victory'](#)

Wed, 2022-05-25 20:08

LONDON: UN envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg said on Wednesday that talks between the Yemeni government and the Houthi militia to reopen roads will be a collective victory for Yemen

"The parties are fulfilling a commitment they made under the truce to work on an agreement that will reduce the suffering of Yemenis in Taiz and other governorates," he said.

“We want to support the parties in setting them on a path that would take Yemen out of a cycle of violence that has severely restricted people’s freedom of movement for more than seven years,” he added. Representatives from the internationally-recognized government and the Iran-backed Houthis held a meeting on opening roads in Taiz and other governorates as per the truce agreement in the Jordanian capital, Amman, under the auspices of the UN envoy. As part of the truce, the parties have also made important progress toward resuming commercial flights to and from Sanaa airport, the envoy’s office said, adding more than 1,000 passengers have traveled so far and the frequency of flights is increasing.

Grundberg: “We want to support the parties in setting them on a path that would take Yemen out of a cycle of violence that has severely restricted people’s freedom of movement for more than seven years.”

– @OSE_Yemen (@OSE_Yemen) [May 25, 2022](#)

Preparations are now under way to resume flights between Sanaa and the Egyptian capital, Cairo, the statement added. “This will allow more Yemenis to travel abroad to access medical care, educational and trade opportunities, and to visit family,” said Grundberg. “I am grateful to the government of Egypt for its cooperation on facilitating flights from Sanaa to Cairo and its active support to the UN’s peace efforts.” Grundberg said he is also working to renew the current truce agreement, which is approaching the end of its two-month period on June 2. “We have seen the tangible benefits the truce has delivered so far for the daily lives of Yemenis. The parties need to renew the truce to extend and

consolidate these benefits to the people of Yemen who have suffered over seven years of war,” Grundberg said.

“The parties need to seize this opportunity, by implementing and renewing the truce and negotiating more durable solutions on security, political and economic issues, including revenues and salaries, to support a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict,” he added.



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Yemenia to operate direct flights between Houthi-held Sanaa, Cairo
Pressure mounts on Houthis to lift Taiz siege

[UN warns Sudan's future hangs in](#)

balance as political stalemate persists

Author:

Tue, 2022-05-24 23:49

NEW YORK: The UN on Tuesday urged the ruling authorities in Sudan to reassure the public that they support dialogue as the only way to reach a political solution to the unrest in the country.

Volker Perthes, the special representative of the UN secretary-general for Sudan, said that to get the political transition in the country back on track, the authorities first need to release remaining detainees, halt arbitrary arrests, and lift the state of emergency.

Time is running out for a political solution that can chart a path out of the current situation, he added, which remains precarious and with much at stake, including the country's political, social and economic stability.

Perthes was speaking during a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the latest developments in the African country, a few days after another peaceful protester was killed by the authorities. The number of demonstrators killed since the military coup on Oct. 25 last year now stands at 96.

"If the authorities want to build trust, it is essential that those responsible for violence against protesters be held to account," Perthes said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's latest report on Sudan stated that the lack of political agreement and of a "fully credible" government is affecting the security situation.

The Security Council meeting also came in the wake of armed clashes between Arab and Masalit communities in Kereneik, West Darfur, in April during which, initial reports suggested, 150 people were killed, many more injured, thousands displaced, and homes, a police station, a hospital and a market were burned down.

Perthes welcomed the decision by armed groups and regular forces to accept the Permanent Ceasefire Committee, chaired by the UN mission in the country, as a joint institution to help bring the conflict under control but warned that despite this, "the risk of a new outbreak of violence remains high."

Although he welcomed the recent release of 86 detainees as an important step toward creating conditions conducive to rebuilding trust, he stressed that at least 111 people are still being held in Khartoum, Port Sudan and other cities.

Peaceful protests continue in Sudan amid public demands for change and the restoration of the democratic transitional process, even as several political parties and coalitions form new alliances and put forward proposals for talks

with rivals.

“As Sudan continues to confront further uncertainty, the shared sense of urgency, combined with their vision for a better future, is driving many parties to seek common ground and increasing openness to dialogue,” Perthes told the members of the Security Council.

“There is also a growing recognition of the need for civilian-military dialogue.”

However, he added that some key stakeholders continue to reject calls for face-to-face talks with their counterparts and prefer to participate indirectly. For that reason, on May 12 the UN launched indirect talks to address a number of core issues, including “the term and composition of key constitutional organs, the future relationship between the military and civilian components, and the mechanism and criteria for the selection of a prime minister.”

Once an understanding is reached on such issues, Perthes said a trilateral mechanism that includes the UN, the African Union, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, an eight-country African trade bloc, will convene for negotiations.

He warned, however, of “‘spoilers,’ who do not want a peaceful transition to democracy or refuse a solution through dialogue. The Sudanese parties should not allow such spoilers to undermine the opportunity of finding a negotiated exit to the crisis.”

The envoy also stressed that the protection of civilians requires the root causes of the conflict to be addressed, including decades of marginalization, land issues, and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

The political stalemate, combined with an economic crisis, poor harvests and global supply shocks, continues to exact a heavy socioeconomic toll on Sudan, where humanitarian needs are incessantly growing amid a 250 percent increase in food prices. According to the UN, the number of people in the country facing acute hunger is projected to double to about 18 million by September this year.

Perthes lamented the fact that the 2022 humanitarian response plan for Sudan has only received “an abysmal” 13 percent of funding, with international donors and financial institutions balking at providing assistance that goes through state systems in the absence of a political agreement to restore constitutional legitimacy.

“While the primary responsibility for these changes lies with the Sudanese stakeholders themselves, I am concerned about the long-term consequences as we watch the further erosion of Sudan’s already fragile state capacity and human capital,” he said.

He also warned that some of the critical assistance from the World Bank Group’s International Development Association 19 that is allocated to Sudan will go to other countries by the end of June if a political agreement cannot

be reached in the country by then.

“If a solution to the current impasse is not found, the consequences will be felt beyond Sudan’s borders and for a generation,” Perthes said.



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